

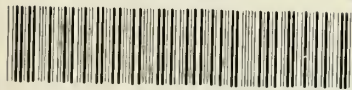
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Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway Study

Becket • Chester • Huntington • Lee • Russell

Landscape Inventory and Assessment

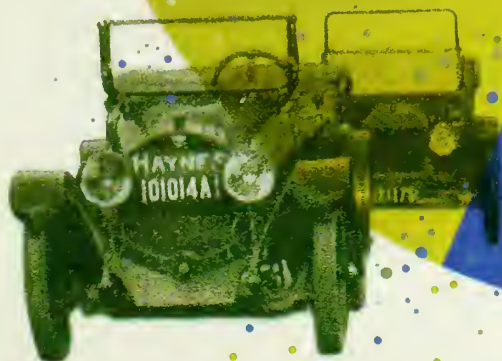
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JACOB'S LADDER TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY STUDY:

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY
- HIGHWAY AND SAFETY ANALYSIS
- LAND USE STRATEGIES
- **LANDSCAPE INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT**

Prepared by the
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
under the direction of Timothy W. Brennan, Executive Director

February 1994

Prepared in cooperation with the Massachusetts Highway Department and the
United States Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration

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JACOB'S LADDER TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY PROJECT

Background

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) received funding under the FY92 Interim Scenic Byways Program for the purpose of recognizing, preserving and interpreting the scenic beauty and historic properties along the Route 20 corridor from Russell to Lee, Massachusetts, commonly referred to as Jacob's Ladder Trail. This Jacob's Ladder Trail area, and in particular the stretch of Route 20 which runs from Russell to Lee, has been recognized even in these modern times as an area unspoiled by commercial franchises, flashy signs and grid development. Instead, the corridor is dotted with quaint little villages and shops, neatly kept historic houses and impressive natural beauty of rock and river. In addition, the project was to prepare the Jacob's Ladder Trail communities for an increase in participation by visitors in the various local cultural and recreational activities by providing adequate public facilities and access to natural and man-made places of interest. A final purpose was to put into effect local controls to provide the maximum protection for the natural and historic resources of the corridor through land use planning tools. The underlying principle of these objectives is to allow economic growth to occur without having a negative impact on the scenic and historic character of the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway.

Overview Of Phase I

The FY92 Phase I Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway Program was initiated in February 1993 and consisted of four major components, historic preservation, transportation, land use and economic development/tourism. The historic preservation activities focused on completing historic resource inventories for the purpose of submission of sites and districts to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, a landscape assessment was conducted along the corridor so as to assess the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the highway. The transportation assessment included an analysis of highway and safety conditions along Route 20 for both bicycle and motorist use. The land use assessment included a detailed review of the five communities zoning bylaws with suggested revisions to address potential development concerns along the highway. A tour book was published which promoted bicyclist and motorist use of the Jacob's Ladder Trail and its immediate area. In addition, much of the data which was collected was put into a series of GIS overlays and mylar base maps to be used in the ongoing assessment and management of the Byway.

A "Jacob's Ladder Trail Advisory Committee" was also created in Phase I and served to help oversee the project and its direction. This committee consisted of representatives from all five communities, the local business association, an area bicycle shop owner and cyclist, Massachusetts Highway Department officials, Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission and the Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission.

LANDSCAPE INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Landscape inventory and assessment was an integral task of the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway Demonstration Project. In order to describe the scenic qualities of the route as a whole with consistency and objectivity, and go on to distinguish the relative merits of areas along the roadside, it was necessary to find a methodology of landscape analysis and one of assessment which could first be applied to a rural New England route and, if possible, be flexible enough to apply to other types of roadside landscape as well. The methodology should be useable when several people are collecting the data, efficient and the results quantifiable. Assessments could then be transferred into spatial or map form, and areas could be designated for protective attention with an understanding of which were the significant features to be protected.

It should be stressed that the technique that emerged is for landscape inventory and assessment. It is not designed to address the architectural or design preferences of the data gatherer. The purpose has been to create a method in which landscapes can be analyzed and an assessment produced that makes use of objectively observable data culled from the landscape.

The method used has stressed objectivity. It is largely based on a study by Frederic O. Sargent of the Vermont Resources Research Center. In the PVPC methodology, landscape perception has been distilled into five overarching categories. Within those categories of perception analysis streamlined into readily observable standards. In most cases, the data collection is reduced to a simple series of yes or no answers or easily quantifiable observations.

Landscape Inventory

The analysis is divided into seven categories of data to be recorded. They are: *location*, *horizon*, *depth of view*, *field of view*, *variety*, *eyesores*, and *comments*. The middle five items are to be registered as numerical values, the first and seventh are recorded in the fashion most suitable to the data gatherer. Definitions of these categories of data are as follows:

Location

Location should be recorded based on the mileage markers already put in place at the roadside. Our study gathered data in half mile intervals. The orientation of the viewer should be also noted. Thus a typical entry would read, "mile marker 44.5/East". Any other information should be included that would facilitate a systematic transfer of data into spatial form.

Field of View

The *field of view* is a measure of the degree of horizon not obstructed from view by something at the immediate roadside. The presumption is that a view is more interesting if there is more to see. One of the cornerstones of landscape perception is that greater variety and contrast produces landscapes of greater interest. Therefore, *field of view* is the important measure of the width of the scene visible to the observer.

The observations made are given ratings of one through five. A rating of one would indicate a corridor with complete obstruction at its sides and the end closed or nearly closed off; a 0 to 15 degree opening. An example of such an occurrence is a roadway lined with mature forest and a right turn at its visual terminus. The forest that follows the roadway also follows the turn and thus

closes the view. A rating of two is given to a roadway corridor similarly obstructed at its sides but open at its end; approximately 20 degrees of visibility. Examples might include a sharp rock outcrop on one side, a dense forest on the other with a distant sloping foothill at the corridor's visual terminus. A three is given to a location with a complete obstruction on one side and clear or partially clear views otherwise; a 25 - 90 degree visual opening. A possible example is a roadway location with mature forest on one side and a large body of water on the other. The *field of view* rating of four is given to views with partial but not complete obstruction on both sides. The full panorama is not visible but scatterings of it may be seen between obstructions, or a complete piece of the horizon up to 120 degrees might be viewed while the rest is blocked. The rating of five is given to locations where the field of view is obstructed only negligibly or where the entire horizon is completely visible.

Horizon

Horizon is an observation of the dominant element or elements that obstruct the eye at the visual terminus, that is to say, it is the landscape element to which the eye is ultimately being led. Because of the capability of this feature to dominate a view it is given a separate category for observation.

As with the *field of view*, this feature is rated on a scale of one to five. Features are assigned a value based on their perceived landscape quality. A concrete highway retaining wall would receive a rating of one. A house or building is given a rating of two. A three rating is given to either a rock outcrop or a forest. A single foothill is given a rating of four. Multiple peaks would receive a value of five.

These horizon elements are region-specific. The elements listed and rated in our study were those that appear on our Pioneer Valley horizon. Other regions have different indigenous features, they should be listed, evaluated and scaled similarly.

Depth of View

The *depth of view* is a measure of the perception of distance from the location of the viewer to the farthest viewable element on the horizon. Where *field of view* is a measure of width, *depth of view* is a measure of depth. The argument for variety and contrast suggests that those views with the greatest depth hold the greatest potential for landscapes of particular merit. Therefore the largest perceived distances to the element in the horizon are rated highest and those of a short distance are rated lowest.

With any exact measurements realistically implausible, in our study the distances were measured in the same way a painter would register them on a canvas. By viewing mountain peaks in shades of green or gray, it was possible to record their perceived distance. A value of one was given to a single foothill where individual trees could be seen. The value of two was given to distances in which a single peak was visible in one shade of gray. Where multiple shades of gray were visible on successive peaks a value of three was recorded indicating the farthest distance. Only values of one through three were given because of the inherent difficulty of measuring with any greater degree of accuracy. In regions where the horizon is not exclusively composed of mountains another measure of perceptual distance will be necessary. It may perhaps even be necessary to reduce the scale to two points; giving one point to a short depth of view and two points to a distant depth of view with some means of dividing the two.

Variety

Specifically to quantify the variety of landscape elements found in a given view a list of region-specific landscape elements of value was made. Each time one of the items on the list was observed a point was added to the *variety* column. The sum of these points was recorded as the *variety* score. Elements of particular impact can be assigned values greater than one. In our study for instance, if multiple mountain peaks were observed two points were added into the total *variety* score because of their singular impact on an individual view. All other items were assigned a value of one because of their roughly equivalent contributions to any given scene.

Eyesores

A column was also included for the purpose of registering eyesores present in the view. *Eyesores* are recorded in the same way as was used with the *variety* column. A list of eyesores is composed and each time one of them is observed in a particular view, a point is registered. These points are later subtracted from the total.

Comments

The two purposes for the *comments* column are to record comments that will assist in the transfer of the recorded information into verbal descriptions, and to note any items that do not appear sufficiently recorded elsewhere. A singularly profound view made up of one dominant element should be noted here. A clear view of Mount Hood or a solitary Joshua tree would qualify.

Phase I: Landscape Assessment

The assessment phase of the procedure is consolidated into the *total rating* column. The *total rating* is the sum of the figures in each observation category minus the points recorded for *eyesores*. Thus, each individual location will eventually have a number for *total rating*. These total ratings or scores are then grouped into a range of numbers and assigned separate symbols for mapping. A total score from 20 to 18, for instance might be given one symbol, totals between 17 and 15 another symbol and so forth. The PVPC total scores were divided into five ranges, each with a separate symbol. The appropriate symbol was then put on the map at the point where the data was collected.

Phase II: Scenic Road Segment Ranking

The process described above and the resulting map was considered phase one in a two phase process. The data from phase one provided for a cross sectional assessment of the landscape at every half mile. The goal of phase two was to generate another map that reflected the more general experience of continuous travel along the roadway corridor. The series of staccato assessments from phase one were linked into contiguous segments of similar landscape quality.

Mean Values

To begin phase two each of the five symbols used in the phase one landscape assessment was assigned a single numerical value which was the mean of the values it represented. For instance, the symbol applied to the scores which ranged between 20 and 17 was given the mean value of 18.5.

Values of Segments

To acquire a rating for the stretch of roadway that connects two data points, the mean values for all of the data stations that lie between those points were added and their average value found. That average value was then considered the rating for that individual segment. The data collected for the Route 20 study was gathered every one half mile. The above method was used to attain a numerical value for each one half mile segment along the entire stretch of roadway. So, instead of values for single data gathering points there are now values for the segments that lie between those points.

Classifying Segments

The next step is to take the values recorded for each of the segments and arrange them into classes. Because the new values are based on the numbers calculated from the phase one data, the rating scale should be linked to the scale used with the phase one figures. The five classes used in phase one were condensed into three for phase two. The highest class was composed of those half mile segments with a value that fell within the range of the top two classes from phase one. The middle class were those segments within the range of the middle class from phase one. The lowest class had a range within those of the lowest two classes from phase one.

Field Testing

Next, the new phase two map was drawn with ribbons of like scenic quality represented by a shared color. The map was then taken into the field for a direct evaluation of its accuracy. In certain instances this evaluation will bring to light necessary adjustments in the assessment. In this study adjustments were made to the range of scores that were used for the three grades. Some segments were very near the margins between two grades and were adjusted either up or down based on the field evaluation. This final step should be re-emphasized. Frequent trips back to the field will often add shadings and dimension that may not have been previously observed.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF JACOB'S LADDER TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY

General

The landscape along this stretch of Route 20 known as Jacob's Ladder Trail, is heavily wooded, frequently hilly, and has many of the features that make the New England landscape distinct: fast running rivers, narrow valleys, pine-covered slopes, and rocky outcroppings. The man-made environment includes classic New England settlement patterns such as widely spaced farms with their farm houses fronting the roads; small village centers with single family houses clustered near stores and churches; and local industrial buildings surrounded by the housing built for their workers. The vernacular architecture most commonly found here dates from the end of the 18th century to the present, modestly representing the range of styles popular throughout the region.

The land form of the region restricted the residents of these hilltowns to only spotty and difficult farmland. When eventually placed in direct competition with the farmlands of the midwest, the farmers of the region were forced either to specialize raising livestock and dairy herds, or find another way of life. The process had an impact on the landscape in ways that can still be observed along Jacob's Ladder Trail. In evidence are the stone walls that once outlined the farms, the mines that opened up the rocky hillsides and the mills along the rivers that still dictate the housing patterns of today. These industries coupled with the tourism and recreation of the present are still visible along this historic highway.

Russell

The Route 90 overpass (mile marker 49.180) might today be considered the eastern gateway to Jacob's Ladder Trail. The massive span of this bridge stretches across the entire valley. Route 20 skirts the southern edge of this valley while the valley floor is occupied by the Westfield River. Upstream, the river acts as an important resource to the towns that surround it. The hills at either side of this valley are the soft, rounded, undulating hills, ubiquitous in the Berkshire hilltowns. They are covered, in large part, by a thick forest canopy. When the winter sets in and the deciduous trees have dropped their leaves, the rocky, thin soiled faces of these hills can be seen. Immediately beside the road, for the first three miles, the exposed rock that composes the surrounding hills forms an intermittent wall along the southern edge. Frequently the face of this wall is sheer and impressive (as much as 30 feet tall). Often though, the two edges of this corridor are dominated not by rock but by the dense forest that covers most of the land in the Pioneer Valley. The road itself is rarely straight. It is constantly climbing and falling as it twists through the hills. The curvature provides a sense of mystery about what lies around the bend or over the next hill.

Two miles after the gateway, at the prospect provided by a small hill, the Whipperton Golf Course occupies a little valley. From this view point, distant hills fold into one another on the horizon. On the other side of the valley are some of the homes of Russell. Just off the road to the north is the mill housing of the Strathmore Mills and the mills themselves. Further along is Russell Center, the residential area of greatest density where the buildings spill out and along Route 20. Handsome, mature sugar maples line the road in this area. By mile marker 45.00 the residential section has ended and the view is no longer restricted by tree canopy and structures. Hillsides now crowd the road to the south and the river draws closer to the north.

By mile 44.40, the river is visible from the road. Also at mile marker 44.40 is a glimpse of the region's farming suspended in time. At the base of a picturesque hill lies the vacant G.H. Mortimore farm. Still standing are the barn and Italianate style farmhouse looking not so long out of use. Beyond this the corridor tightens as the dense forest borders the roadside. Just around the bend, in a half mile, the entrance to another pocket of mill housing resides. The Crescent Mills section of

Russell was built around a handsome mill at the river's edge that is still in use today. Examples of the various strata of mill workers' housing and a small Crescent Mills school are built close to the road. Behind the mill a series of large hills in the middle distance frame the view. The Crescent Mills node is a mere half mile in length on the straight tangent between two curves in the road. When the road curves, the mill is left behind though its affect on the river can be seen in the river's greater width and slower current. This point (mile marker 43.10) is a spot popular with sportsmen who park at the roadside pull-off to strap on their waders and throw in a line. The road descends and we then cross into Huntington.

Huntington

At the bottom of the short descent lies a lovely meadow area enclosed by steep hillsides all around and the ever present river to the north. This is probably the clearest view of the river to be had along Jacob's Ladder Trail. From a roadside pull-off one can walk right into the river. Handsome old oaks shade the picnic tables. In the meadow area are a residence and the Huntington Medical Center. Farther down the road is a small cemetery set back from the road. Providing the enclosure for these features is a large heavily wooded hill with a very pleasing, gentle slope. At the end of this meadow the road again rises as it passes low density residential housing. The housing density increases gradually until the road rounds a curve, and begins descending into downtown Huntington at mile marker 42.00. The view opens considerably to reveal most of the downtown with its three classic New England church spires, village green with gazebo, business district, and a wealth of Greek Revival architecture. The topography at this point provides a dramatic backdrop to the scene with another complement of large steeply sloping hillsides in the middle distance. The road curves through town then joins up alongside a railroad track to the north. The partial clearing provided by the rail, as well as the opening afforded by the river on the other side of the rail, combine to create a relatively large open vista of the surrounding landscape (mile marker 41.40). For the first time along the route the view is unobstructed by overhead utility cables and poles. The density of the housing at this back end of the downtown sector lightens up rather abruptly and is replaced by the dense forest wall on both sides with intermittent rock outcrops to the south. Occasional glimpses of high hills on the distant horizon are visible from some vistas along this mile and a half stretch.

Chester

By the Chester town line at mile marker 40.10 the landscape flattens out. Deep evergreen forest cover lies to the south with the rail and river to the north. There is little else visible because of the dense forest walls and the road is elevated to a point even with its surrounding hills. This combination of features is typical of this stretch of Jacob's Ladder Trail. The entrance to the Chester State Forest is located at mile marker 38.90. It is a pull-off that has been developed for the use of the automotive traveler to picnic or rest. This spot is one of three access points for the State Forest along Route 20. By mile marker 38.10 the hills are tighter, closer to the road and houses begin to reappear. Once again, as the road bends and descends into an open valley, the housing density increases. First though, one passes a lumber mill to the north with rail access and a dense grove of white pine beside it. On the south side of the road is another less developed State Forest pull-off. At mile marker 37.00 much of the distant hilly horizon is apparent. Adjacent hills surround and enclose this space. The river is again close to the road and an undeveloped roadside pull-off affords the opportunity to fish for Atlantic salmon. The end of the space is pinched shut and the road becomes a tight corridor again as the road rises out of the small valley. Houses continue at low density beside the twisting road. A defunct abrasives plant lies below the road to the north at mile marker 35.70.

Downtown Chester, historically known as Chester Factory Village, begins in earnest by mile marker 35.50. The narrow corridor opens up, housing becomes denser, and some store fronts appear. Chester Factory Village, like the other two downtown areas that precede it is largely contained within a valley. The main commercial node is located off of Route 20 on a switch-back road. As the road ascends out of the valley, homes continue to line the roadside and several side streets have similar residential densities. Because the river has now crossed under the road, the corridor is defined by the steep hillside to the north and a depression with the river and other residences to the south. The road at this point is considerably higher than the development found to the south. The housing density gradually lessens to approximately one home every one third mile. At mile marker 34.6 a steep hillside to the north steps back briefly from the road to allow for a pleasant pull-off with a stone family crypt (Abott memorial) at the base of a hillside cemetery. Across the road, the deeply chiseled river takes a sharp turn to head north almost perpendicularly. The river continues well below the level of the road for much of the remaining mileage. Beyond this point the slopes near the road which have decreased housing density are now sometimes rocky and are deeply forested on both sides.

Becket

The Becket town line lies at mile marker 33.70. The river will cross under the road several times from this point. The corridor is still tightly defined and the road begins an almost continuous ascent from here. The view to either side of the road is greatly limited by the tight enclosure so most of the visual asset in this portion lies close to the road or in occasional glimpses of the distant horizon directly ahead or behind. This ascent continues until mile marker 28.80 at the summit of Morey Hill. At the summit is the vacant Summit House with an historic stone cairn nearby. The descent begins through deep forest cover. When an opening occurs at marker 28.00, a large meadow stretches to the north and includes a network of brooks and wetlands. This is another instance where the surrounding hills enclose the space to provide a wonderful sense of containment. By 26.50 the real payoff for the continuous climb begins. A vista emerges that includes the distant mountains, a large meadow/wetland area surrounded by hills in the middle distance, spanned in the foreground by a highway bridge, and all framed by the heavy evergreen forest cover at either side of the road. The descent into this space is one of the steepest found on the route. Arriving at the floor of the space, the sensation is that of a small oasis of grasses, wildflowers, and open space, particularly dramatic after emerging from a shady tightly enclosed corridor. An old cemetery with lovely stone walls lies at mile marker 25.90. The road skirts around the outside edge of the meadow and becomes once again tightly defined by forest edges.

At mile marker 24.30 Greenwater Pond reveals itself. It has a scattering of homes around its shores and steep rocky hills to the north and south. At the base of the hill to the north is our Route 20, while the Massachusetts Turnpike lies at the foot of the southern hillside. Farther along by mile marker 23.00 just west of the pond is a wetland with standing water. The road then rises out of this depression and takes on the moderately settled character that it retains for the rest of the distance into Lee. A few sand and gravel mines have eroded the steep slopes behind the homes at the roadside.

Lee

Lee contains the most consistent architectural fronts along the roadside. The area known as East Lee through which Route 20 passes, is an area of mainly mid-19th century houses and out buildings. The road here is a confined corridor for almost its entire stretch. However, at mile marker 22.5, the border with Becket, it begins opening to the south across a broad meadow. The meadow slopes down to Goose Pond which is not visible from the road. At mile marker 21.5 the road crosses over the Massachusetts Turnpike and from this point on the corridor closes. When structure does not present the enclosing wall, dense forest does. Greenwater Pond Brook

runs parallel to the road here on the north creating a valley which criss-crosses the roadway at several points. More consistently visible than the stream valley is a high berm which is the railroad bed of the long defunct trolley line tracing its way beside the road between Becket and Lee. After confinement by the corridor, the road opens out on the periphery of Lee center at mile marker 19. Here toll booths and access roads to the Massachusetts Turnpike tangle with Routes 102 and 20. The open space on which this occurs is the plain of the Housatonic River which runs through Lee. Route 20 takes a turn north into the town center of Lee at about mile marker 18.5 following the river plain north and curves its way through the solidly built townscape to end at the pleasant Lee Common, the terminus of Jacob's Ladder Trail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scenic Landscape Inventory was conducted on the Jacob's Ladder Trail Section of Route 20 between Russell and Lee, traveling in both directions, during the summer, fall and winter months to quantify the scenic views and to establish relative values of scenic areas along the Trail. Numerical evaluations were made at half-mile intervals documenting the views and features and eyesores at each of these points both verbally and photographically. In addition, a narrative was prepared for the entire Trail which describes the experience of traveling the road, making the description of Jacob's Ladder Trail fully dimensional. With this field work as a foundation, the most scenic areas along the Trail were identified and mapped.

The purpose of the inventory was to identify the qualities and features which make Jacob's Ladder Trail a scenic byway and to distinguish among the various sections of the road variations in degree of scenic importance. These distinctions can then be used for helping to make decisions about the sections of the roadside which are more or less deserving of conservation, and where improvements might best be directed.

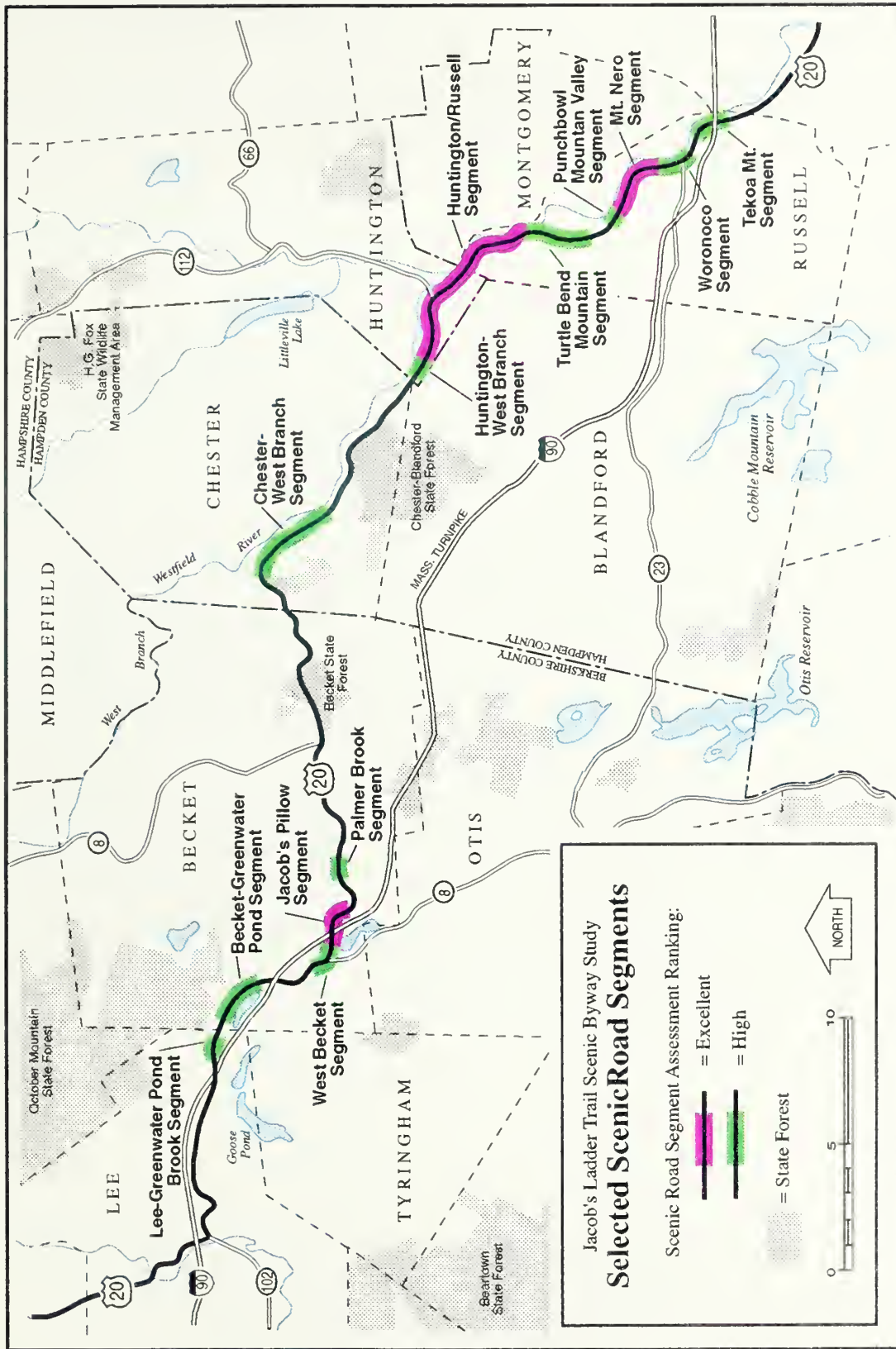
Recommendations for Scenic Priorities

Highly rated scenic sections of varying lengths were found in each of the five communities with Russell and Huntington having the greatest proportion, Chester being third, Lee and Becket having the shortest lengths. Included in this report is a map locating these road segments and identifying their relative values. It is the recommendation of this report that decisions concerning development and conservation should take into consideration the different levels of scenic importance described by this inventory. Careful attention must be paid to conserving the scenic qualities of the two most highly ranked categories, but more flexibility may be given to the sections of the road with the more modest rankings.

Recommendations for Scenic Improvements

The Scenic Landscape Inventory allowed for a summary of the scenic qualities of Jacob's Ladder Trail. In addition it allowed for a comparison of scenic qualities within the Trail as well as with other appreciated rural roads in the region. It was demonstrated that the Jacob's Ladder Trail Corridor is scenic for its varying topography, for the river views it offers, for the variety of vegetation areas from ledge to wetland and woodland, and for the modest but well-maintained 18th, 19th and early 20th century buildings and structures along it. Further, it is in large part uninterrupted by commercial signs, standardized buildings, clear-cut lots, overscaled structures, or any of the many other ways in which rural corridors are spoiled scenically. In essence this is an excellent example of the typical New England rural corridor unspoiled by over-development. It is this modest quality which, paired with its natural resources, is the underlying theme of the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway. It follows then that future efforts to develop and enhance the landscape should be measured against these qualities of modesty and typicality. In the spirit of this recommended standard or benchmark, a number of proposed scenic enhancements follow:

- There are an adequate number of turn-outs along the corridor. It is preferable to improve the existing amenities to constructing new ones. These turn-outs are part of the history of the road since they are original curves in the roadway which were kept when the road was straightened. Therefore, keeping them is both aesthetically and historically preferable.
- Turn-outs along Route 20 should be landscaped with native plants, the rural gravel road surfaces of the turn-outs should be maintained but improved, and more formal borders should be established between the areas designed for bicyclists and pedestrians and those designated for cars.
- Materials for byway signage should be constructed and mounted on materials appropriate to the rural theme of the Byway; ie, wood, in some cases painted bronze or low luster metals. Signs should be placed against a backdrop so that they are not profiled against the horizon and the reverse sides should be wood and not reflective metal.
- Vegetation along the highway should be pruned to open views of the Westfield River.
- Where possible, easements should be obtained on open spaces located in scenically important areas.
- Easement should be obtained on entrances to culturally significant areas, such as Jacob's Pillow in Becket, so that the rural experience is emphasized.
- Residential and commercial development should maintain the scale, materials and simplicity of design which characterize the best segments along the corridor. Buffering new development with vegetation is recommended to retain and, where possible, improve the scenic values of the roadway.
- Existing retaining walls of concrete and metal should be replaced with more aesthetically appropriate retaining walls without compromising their safety purpose. The Federal Highway Administration together with the National Park Service has developed a number of options which should be considered for new retaining walls.
- Existing guard rails should be replaced with new guard rails of more aesthetically appropriate design and materials, i.e. the wooden/metal rails once again developed by the Federal Highway Administration and the National Park Service. The objective is to meet the rigors of highway travel and maintenance, including snowplowing in the winter, yet blend into the landscape.
- Jersey barriers should be removed as soon as possible.
- Above ground utility lines along the Byway should be buried where feasible.
- Future development should be directed away from the ridgelines of abutting hills, to prevent the blocking of significant views into the distance. These so-called "viewsheds" are outside the boundaries of the corridor, but are essential to its continuing scenic value.
- Specific zoning and historic district recommendation appear in the Cultural Resources Inventory Report and the Land Use Strategies Report respectively.








SELECTED SCENIC ROAD SEGMENTS

The following pages include photographic and narrative descriptions of thirteen selected road segments along Jacob's Ladder Trail. These photographs and descriptions serve as a representative visual descriptions of the proposed scenic byway and demonstrate its historic and natural beauty. The accompanying maps provide location, points of interest, mileages, and geographic features surrounding each road segment.

LEGEND

For Scenic Road Segment Maps

SCENIC LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT VALUES




-  = 4 – 6 points
-  = 7 – 11
-  = 12 – 14
-  = 15 – 16
-  = 17 – 20


Scenic Landscape Assessment Values

reflect analysis made at specific stations along the Jacob's Ladder Trail and are predominately at half-mile intervals. The symbols shown are graphic representations from the assessment made on that analysis data.

Scenic Road Segment Rankings represent an assessment based on the experience along contiguous stretches of the byway corridor. Stress is placed on the sequence of experiences rather than the spot assessments made in the landscape assessment.

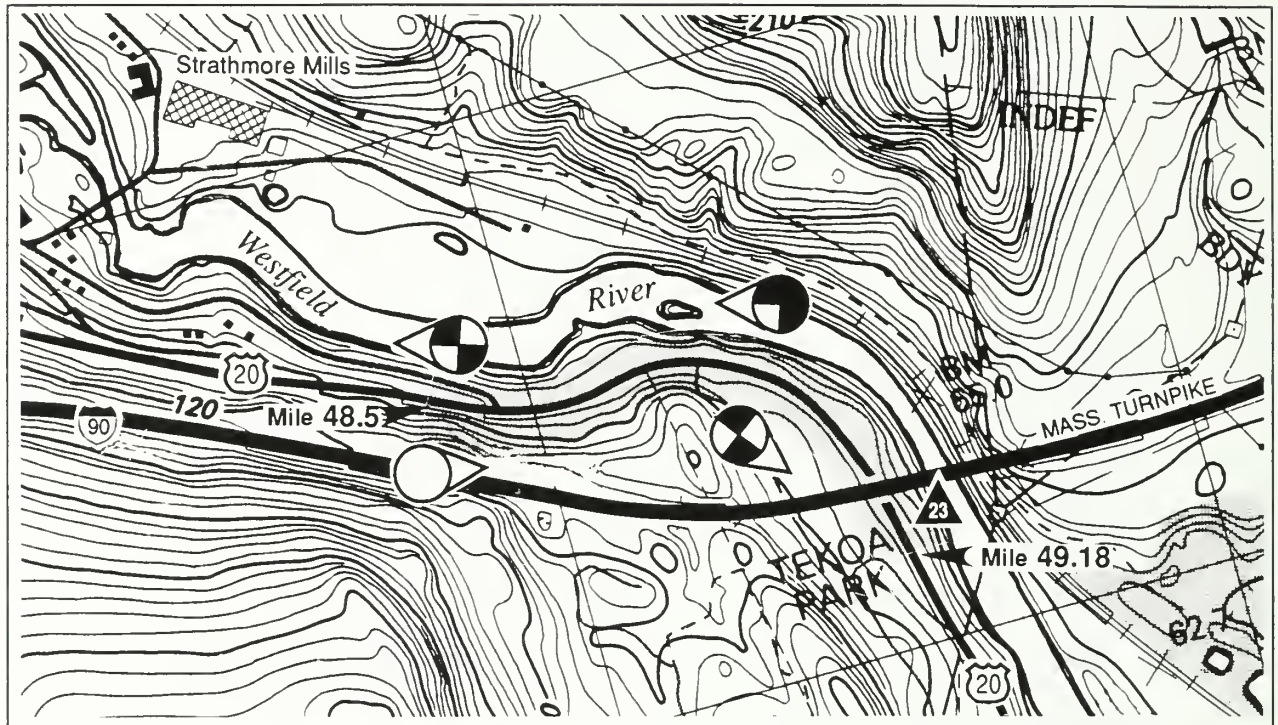
CULTRUAL, RECREATIONAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES

-  = National Register Historic District
-  = Proposed Natl. Rgstr. Historic District
-  = Cultural Resources:
- 9. THE miniature theatre OF CHESTER
 - 11. Jacob's Pillow Dance Theatre
 - 12. Chester-Becket Granite Railroad

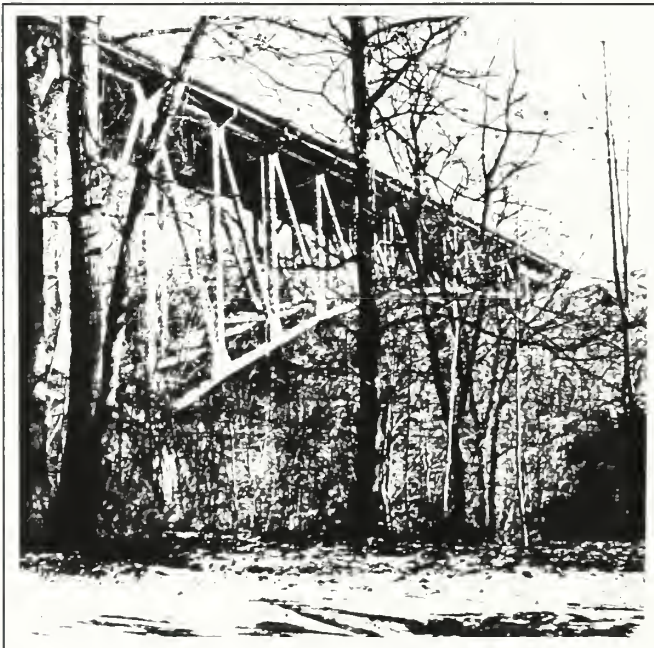
-  = Recreational and Scenic
Points of Interest:

1. Appalachian National Scenic Trail
2. Stone arch bridge and trail
3. North Chester Historic District (proposed)
4. Mt. Gobble
5. National Scenic River Area
6. Goose Pond
7. Littleville Lake
8. Chester Factory Historic District
10. Kelly Wildlife Management Area
13. Littleville Dam (Army Corps of Engineers)
14. Summit House
15. Rising Sun Golf Course
16. Chester-Blandford State Forest Picnic Area
17. Hiking trail access
18. Chester-Blandford State Forest
19. Sanderson Brook Falls
20. Russell Reservoir
21. Tekoa Mountain
22. Salmon Falls
23. Westfield River canoe access and rock formations
24. Strathmore-Tekoa Park
25. Roadside park and fishing access
26. Beginning of the Westfield National Scenic River Area

TEKOA MOUNTAIN



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



The Massachusetts Turnpike viewed northeast

Symbolic and true gateway to Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway from the east, this segment of the road has most of the topographical features and vegetation which characterize the Byway as a whole. With the Massachusetts Turnpike soaring overhead, travelers on Route 20 are led to expect that they are on a back road, a rural road remote from truck plazas and shopping malls. Curves in the road give views of the forested canyon on one side, exposed ledge on the other side as hills unfold in the distance. Along the way, the first views of the tallest smoke stack at Strathmore Mills is a visual landmark which pulls travelers along and orients them to the Westfield River.

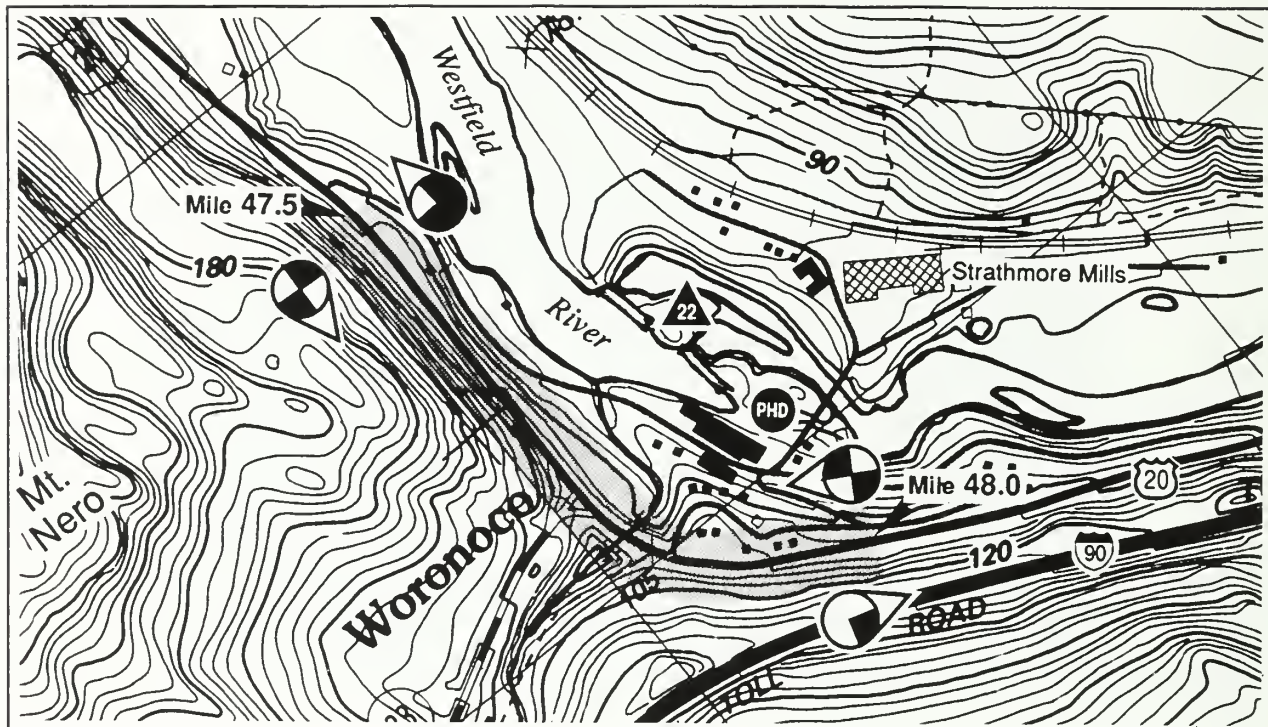


View northwest

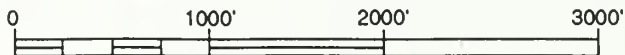


View northwest

WORONOCO



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



Strathmore Mills and Tekoa Mountain

Tekoa Mountain provides a northern backdrop to Strathmore Mills in the village of Woronoco in this segment. The changes in seasons bring a good deal of scenic variety which adds to the variety in topography to make this a highly ranked part of the Byway. In the Fall the elevation is high enough to offer a prospect of the brilliantly colored foliage. Winter brings cascades of ice off the ledges which are often colored blue, green, orange and yellow by residents of the area. In the summer leaves fill in and soften the contours of the hills with a dense green punctuated by occasional white birches.

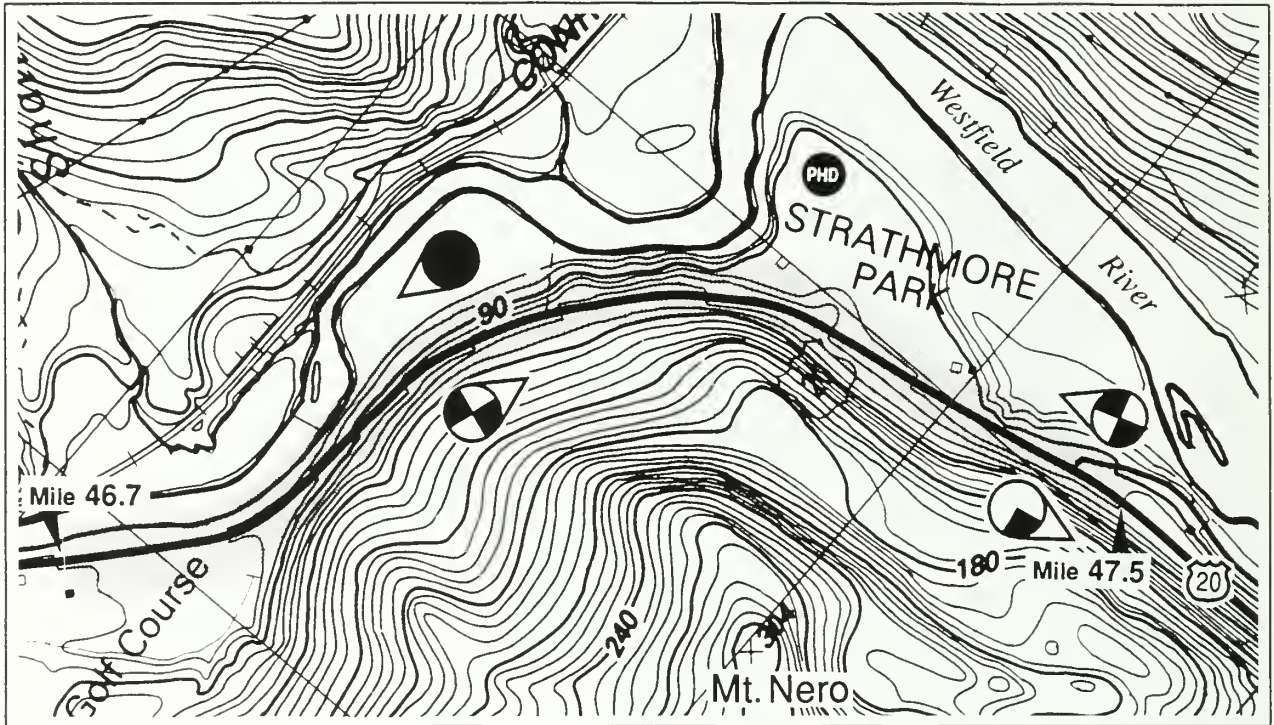


View west

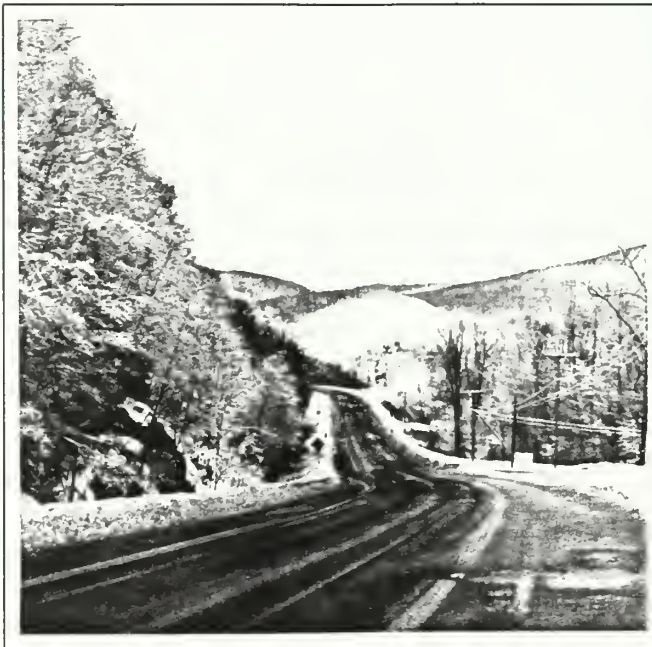


View southeast

MT. NERO



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **EXCELLENT**



Mt. Nero and view west

At the southeastern end of this segment Route 20 hugs the sheer, rocky flank of Mt. Nero. The Westfield River bends away from the road, becoming less of a presence. At the northwest end of the segment a small enclosed valley makes a surprise of its open vista after the narrow, forested road corridor. Views of the river and multiple peaks are especially fine here.

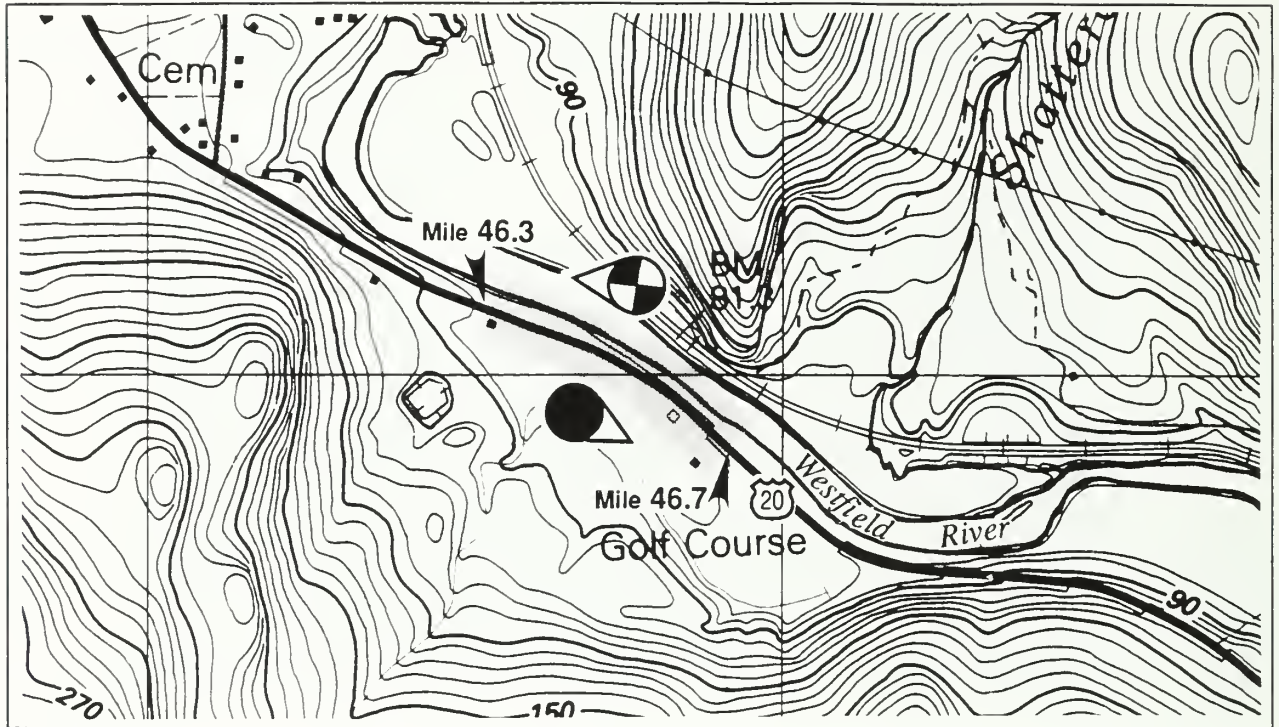


View west



View southwest

PUNCHBOWL MOUNTAIN VALLEY



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



View southeast

This short section of the road consists of the small open valley enclosed by hills seen from the Mt. Nero segment. Along its northwest end is found the steepest and longest contiguous rock outcropping on Jacob's Ladder Trail. The rocks and crags were much prized in the trolley travel literature publicizing this route at the turn of the century and later in the series of postcards which promoted car travel in the 1920s.

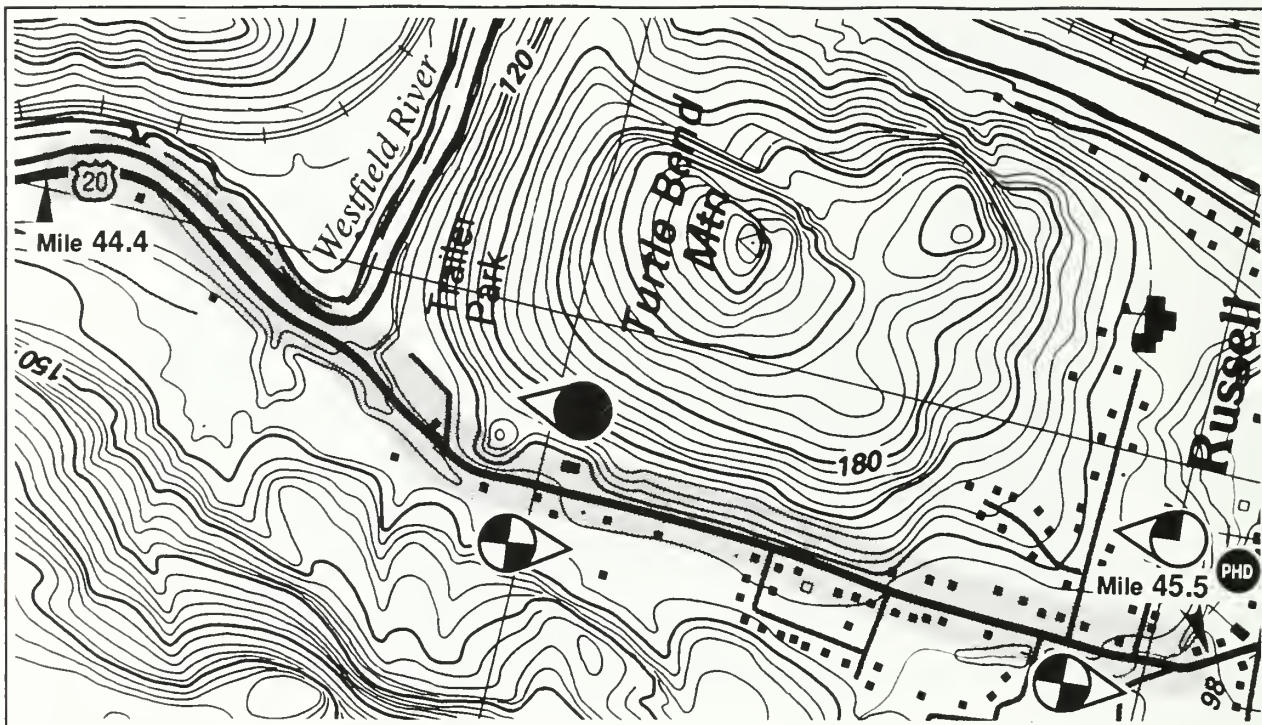


View east



Punchbowl Mountain and view west

TURTLE BEND MOUNTAIN



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



View east to Turtle Bend Mountain

Russell Center with its historic buildings and houses anchors the southern end of this segment, while residential development spreads along the narrow river valley to the north. Views are dominated by Turtle Bend Mountain lying on the east side of the road. The Westfield River rejoins the road at the northern end of the segment offering good views of the swiftly moving water. Anchoring the northern end is one of the abruptly opening, but sharply enclosed, fertile valleys which gave rise to the old Mortimore farm whose large barn stands close to the house and road.

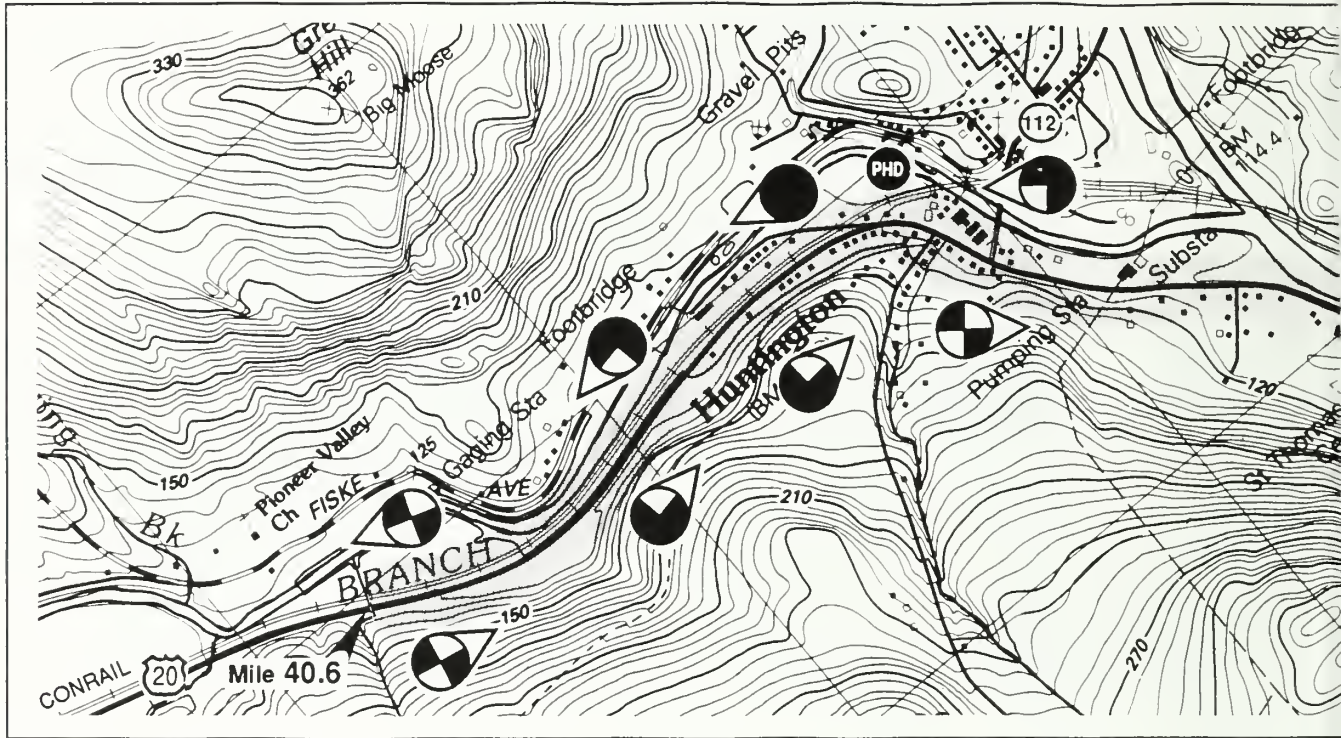


Russell Center view south



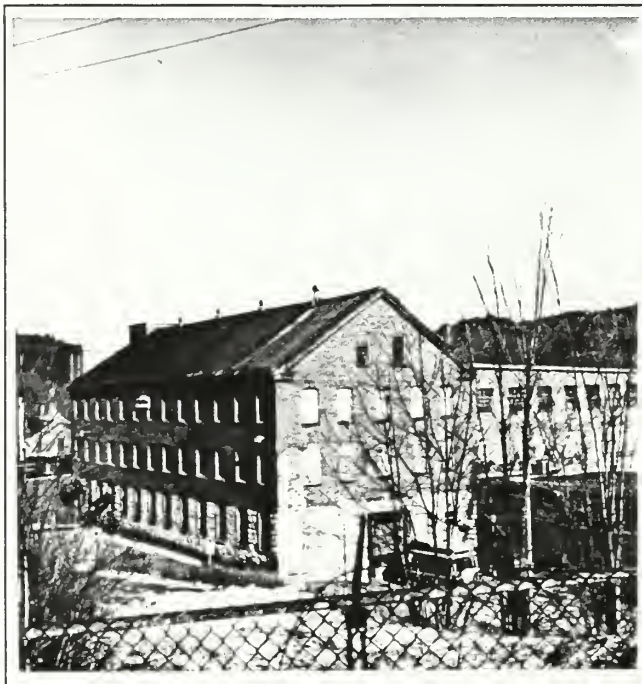
Mortimore Farm view north

HUNTINGTON / RUSSELL



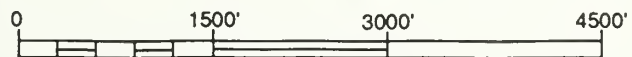
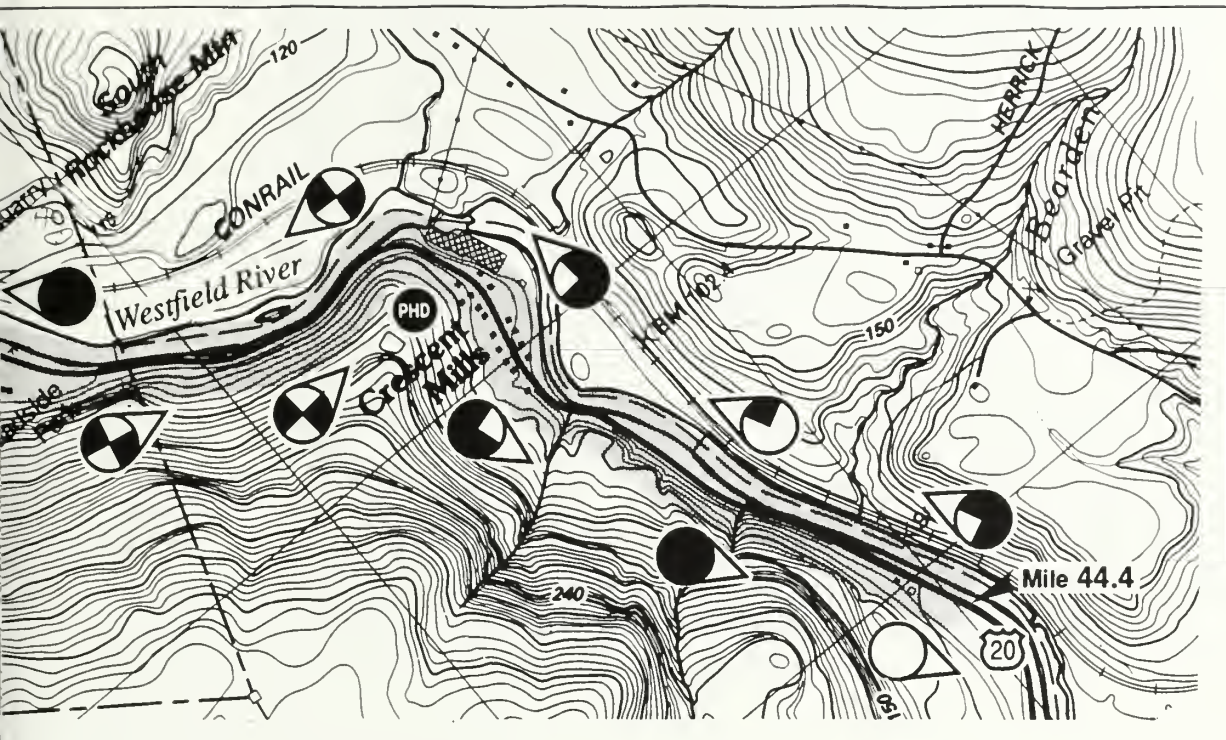
Scenic Road Segment

Assessment Ranking: **EXCELLENT**



Crescent Mills view northeast

The longest of the thirteen scenic segments along this route and one which spans two towns, this section contains both scenic and cultural resources. On the south the historic village of Crescent Mills shows the influence of its riverside setting: the mill adjacent to the impressive falls which powered it and workers' housing and school aligned along the narrow valley road. Old stone walls, beautiful valleys and a large pull-off giving easy access to the river characterize the center of the section. Just south of Huntington Center the Westfield River turns north while the road will follow its West Branch. Handsome church spires rise above the village. Its historic houses spreading from the strategically located crossroads represent an engaging mix of 19th century New England architecture and town planning.



Crescent Mills view north



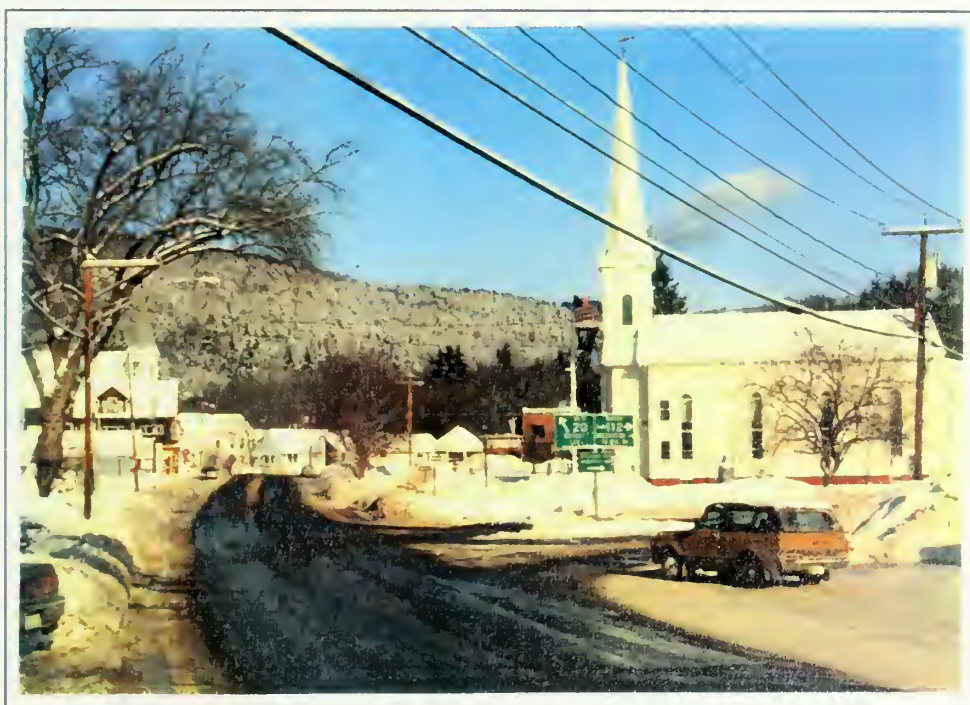
Pull-over and view northwest



Picnic area on Westfield River

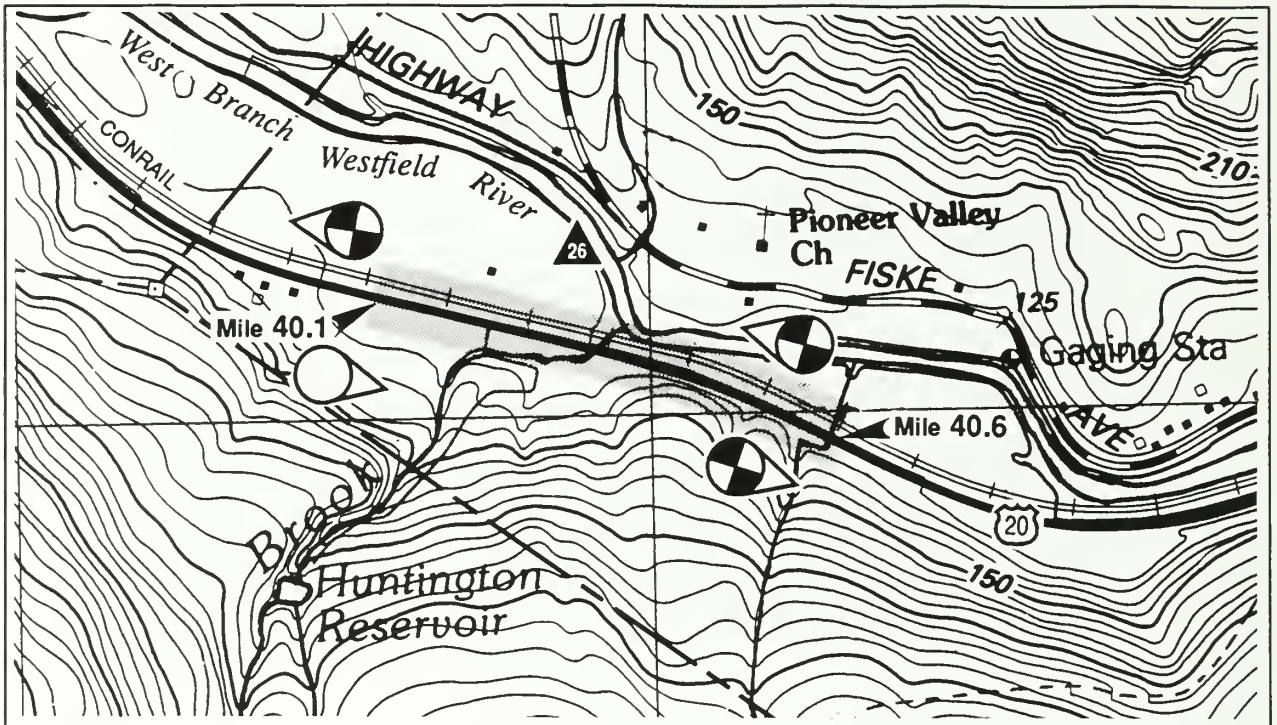


View north



Huntington Center

HUNTINGTON-WEST BRANCH

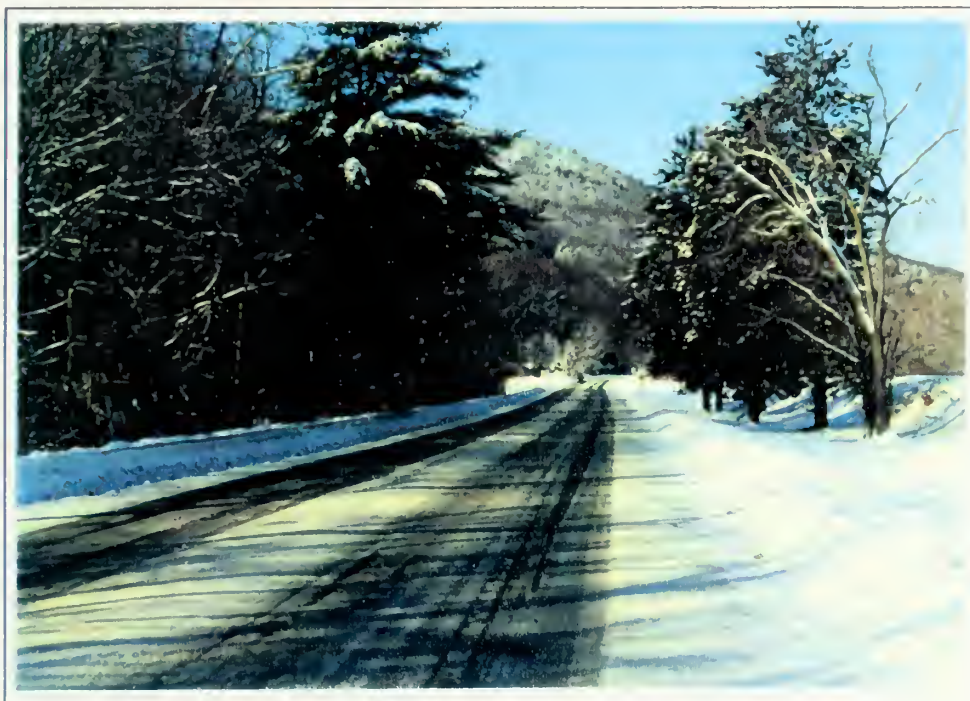


Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**

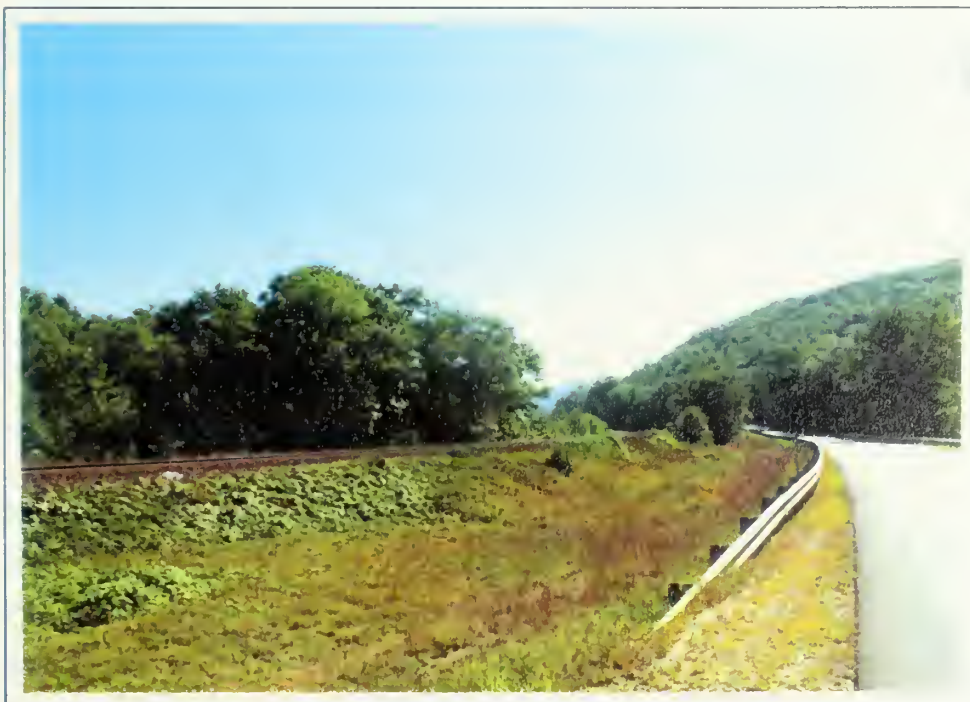


Railroad and view northwest

Although the river continues to parallel the road on the north side of this segment, it is mostly blocked from view by a raised railroad bed set back from the road and screened in some parts by a fringe of trees, open in others. A dense woodland provides closure on the south side of the road. The roadway makes several broad curves but is relatively flat here and drivers experience it as an open stretch or clearing.



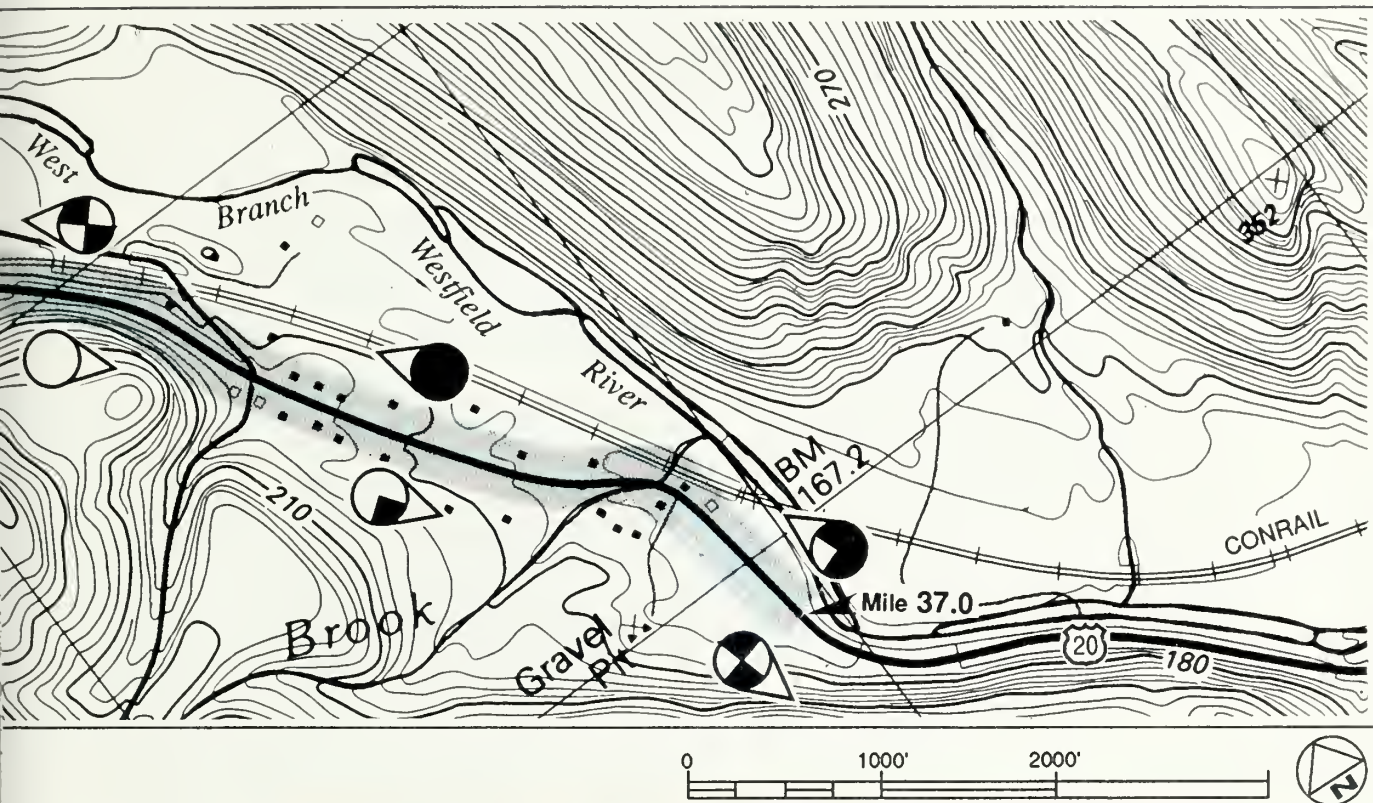
View northwest



Railroad and view southeast

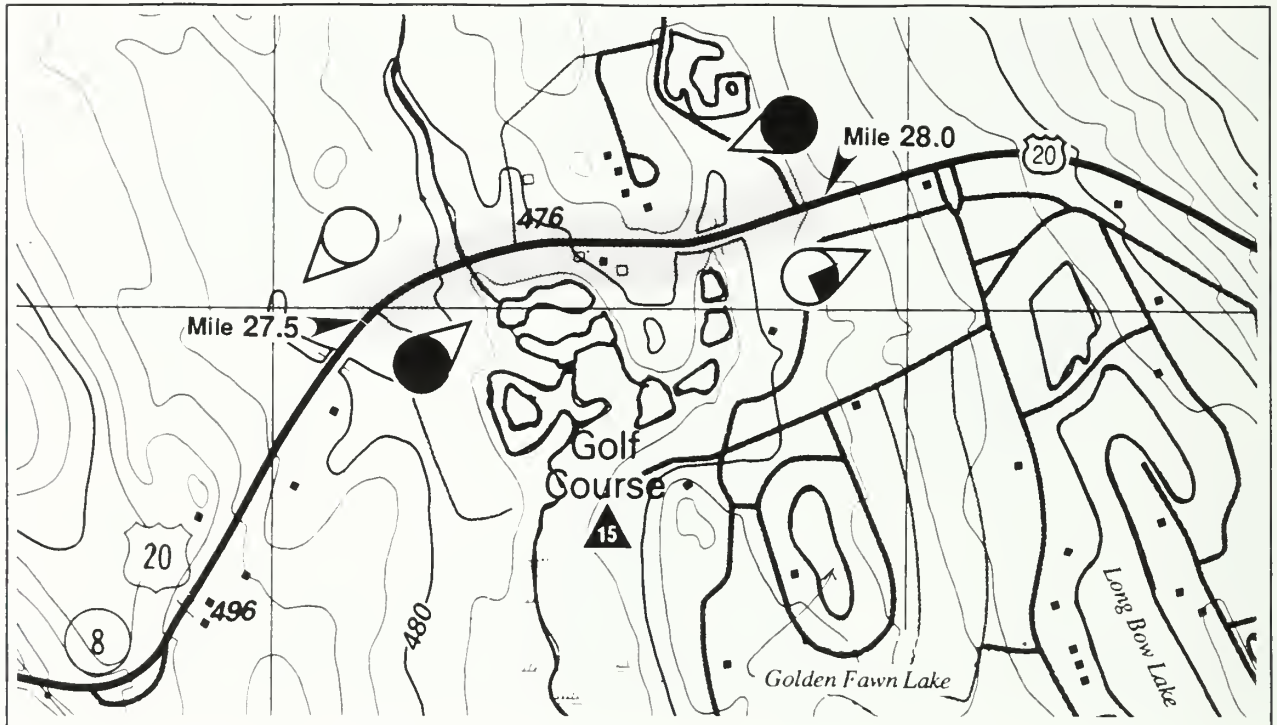
A black and white photograph of a winter scene. In the foreground, a snow-covered path leads towards a small, arched bridge made of dark wood or metal. The bridge spans a narrow, snow-filled stream or ditch. Several tall, bare trees with intricate branch structures stand prominently in the mid-ground, their dark silhouettes contrasting against the bright, snowy background. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, with some small patches of grass or debris visible. The overall atmosphere is quiet and cold.

The Chester-West Branch segment combines three scenic elements: an historic village, within a valley of rounded hills, crossed by a rock strewn river. The varying slopes of Prospect Hill dominate the north side of the road while Round Top Hill rises on the south to create the river valley. Views from the road of the West Branch of the Westfield River are clear on the east end of the segment but on the west the road loses sight of the river as it passes through the Chester Factory Village Historic District.

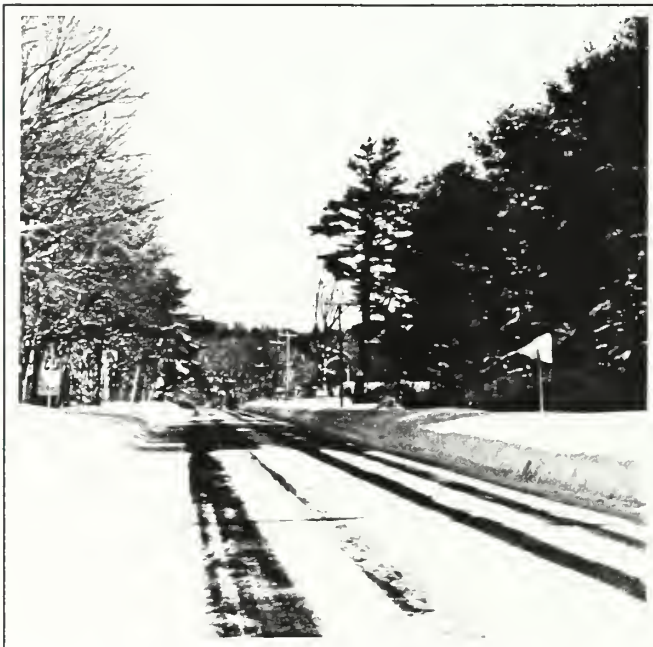
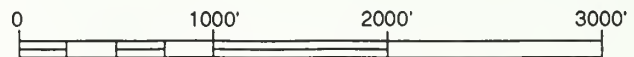


Chester Factory Village view east

PALMER BROOK



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



View northeast to Jacob's Ladder

The Palmer Brook has formed one of the prettiest valleys along Jacob's Ladder Trail here, enhanced by the landscaping of a golf course along the brook. The open space of the golf course on the south side of the road maintains the appearance of farmland surrounding an early 19th century farm house which is set with its barns close to the road. On the west end of the segment, there is woodland on both sides of the rising road and on the east the road starts its ascent over Jacob's Ladder.

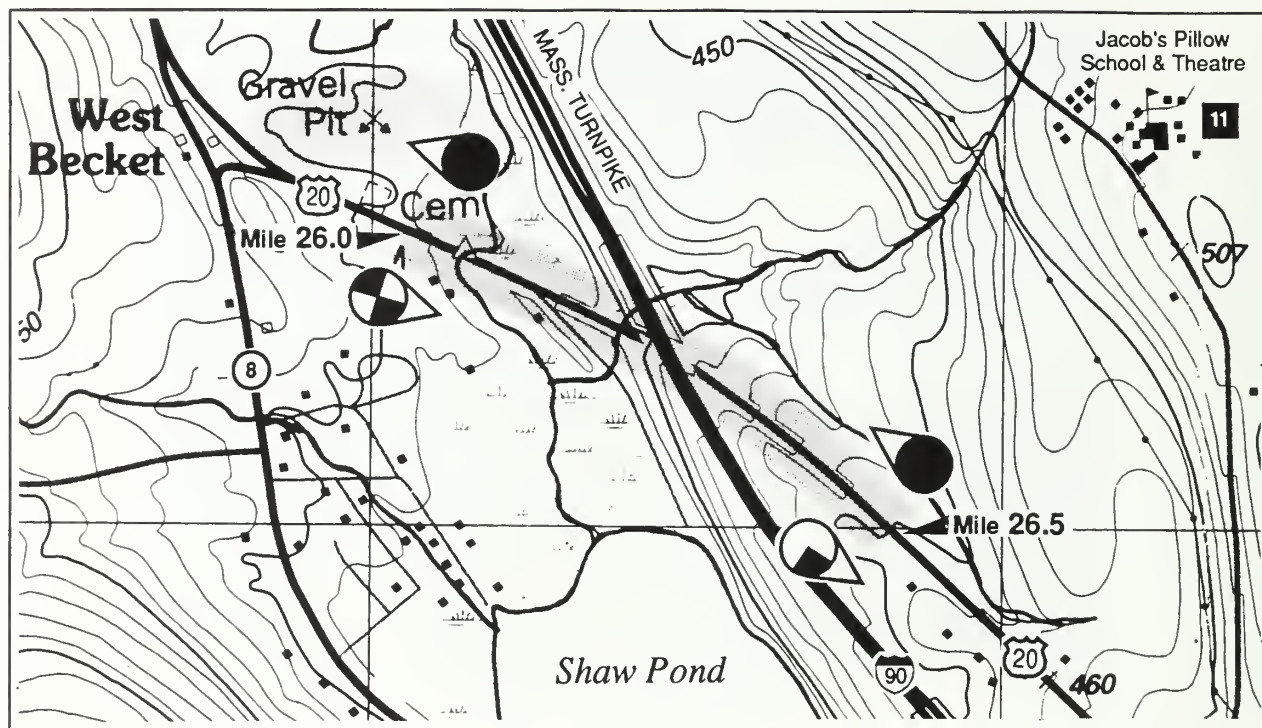


Brookside Farm view southwest



Brookside Farm view southwest

JACOB'S PILLOW



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **EXCELLENT**



View northwest

This segment of the road rises from marsh land on the west to foothills on the east and vegetation changes correspondingly from wetlands *drykae* to the red pine of the uplands. Rimmed in the distance by hills, the area is divided into the two types of terrain by the long expanse of a Massachusetts Turnpike bridge. On each side of this bridge the gradual slope of the road runs its course with few turns.

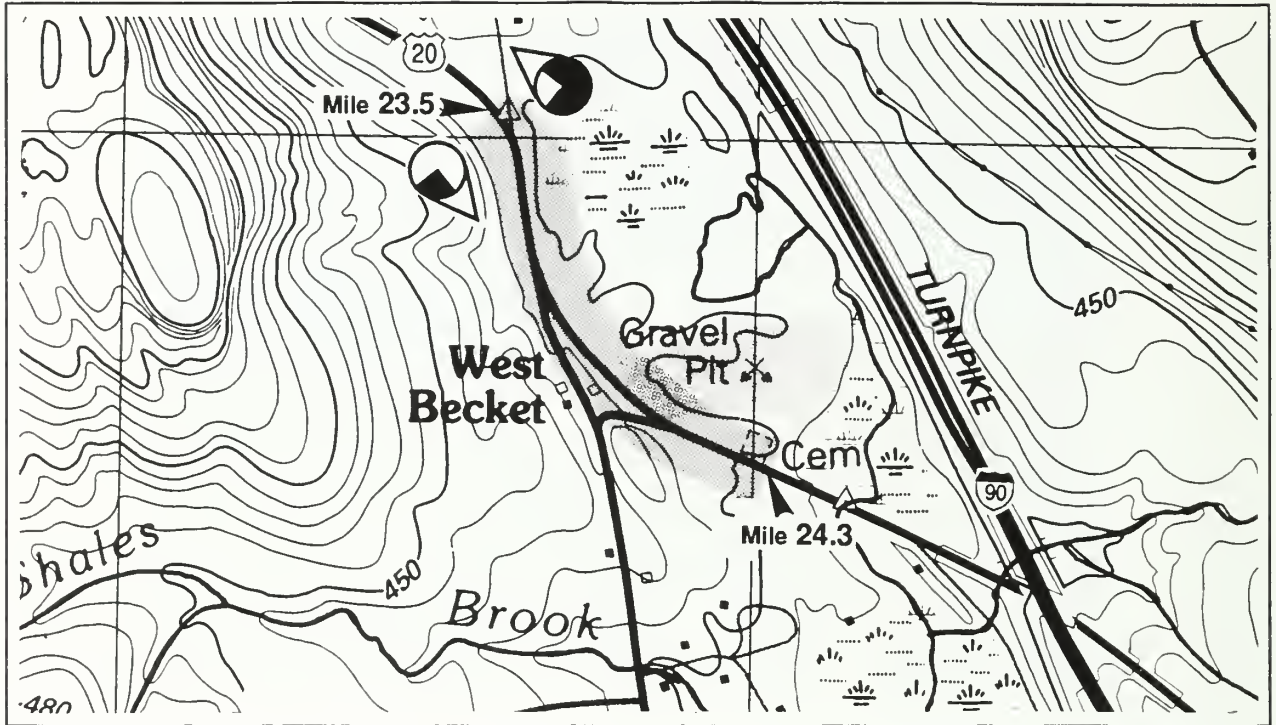


Wetland viewed northwest



Wetland viewed north

WEST BECKET



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



Wetland view north

Route 20 in West Becket is a rather flat stretch of road which crosses a wetland enclosed by hills. There are a few contemporary homes set back from the road on the south, and Route 8 intersects on the south, but this segment is characterized by marshes on the north side of the road whose low bushes, grasses and wetland vegetation are beautiful in all seasons. The West Becket cemetery set on a small rise and surrounded by hardwood trees is a visual landmark made prominent by its fieldstone piers and low wall next to the road.

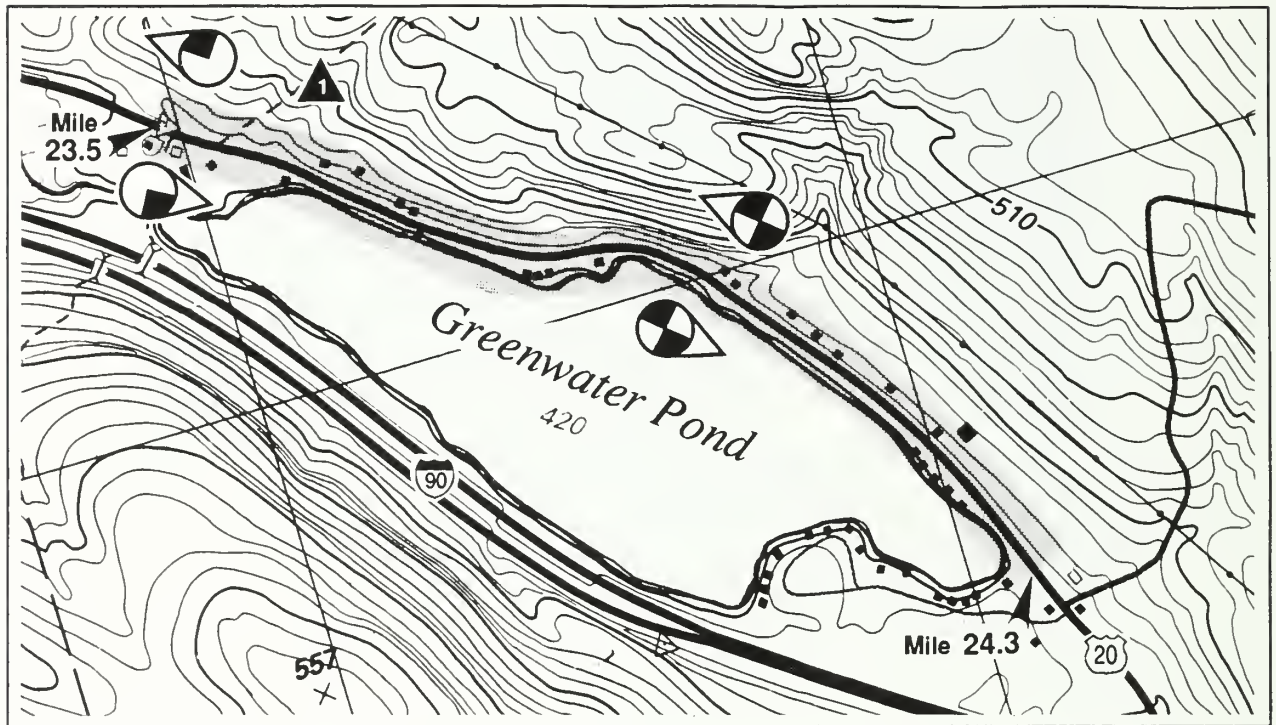


West Becket Cemetery view northeast

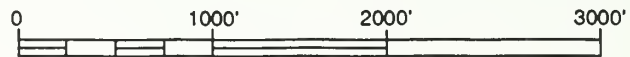


View north

BECKET-GREENWATER POND



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



Houston House and view east

Jacob's Ladder Trail follows the irregular north shore of Greenwater Pond in this segment. On the north side of the road are the steep foothills of Becket Mountain with occasional cottages and cabins scattered at the edge of the road and above it in the woods. On the south side of the road at the edge of the Pond there are a few buildings set very close to the road, but they do not interfere with a broad vista which opens towards a range of hills on the south whose crests are unbroken by buildings or towers of any sort. The contrast between the water and the hills beyond is a contrast of color, texture and shape, and changes with the seasons.

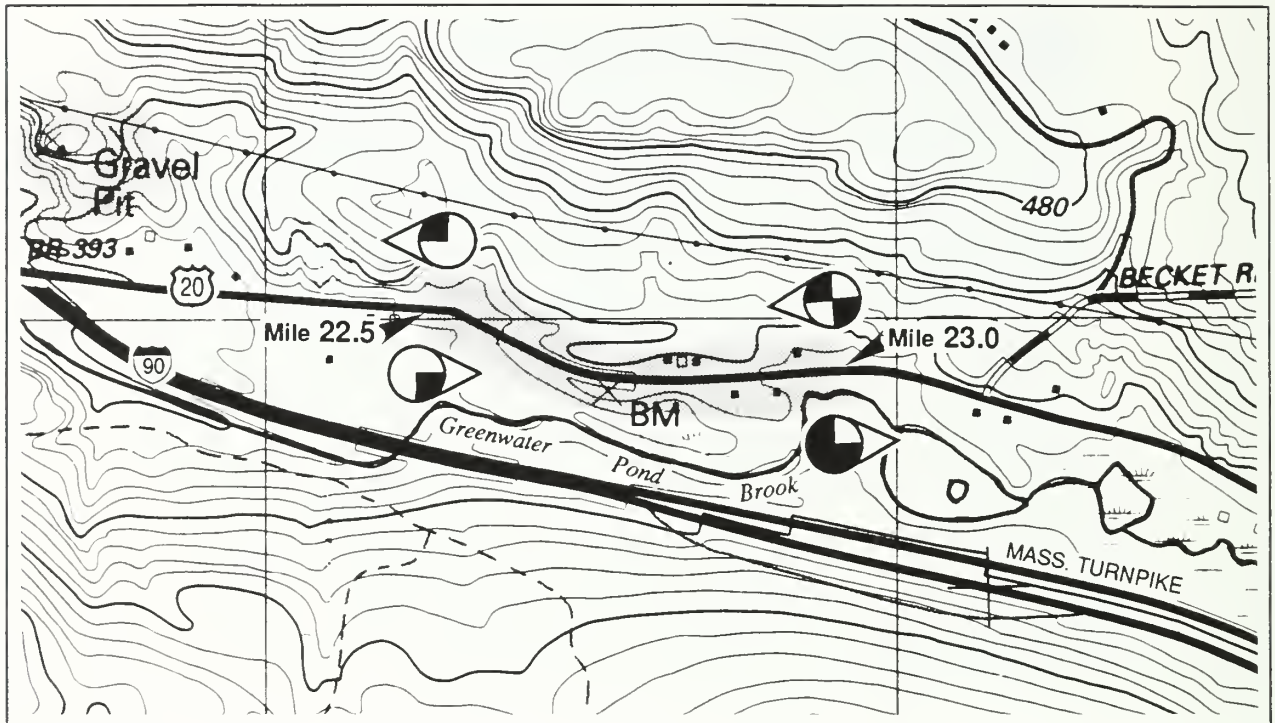


Greenwater Pond view northwest

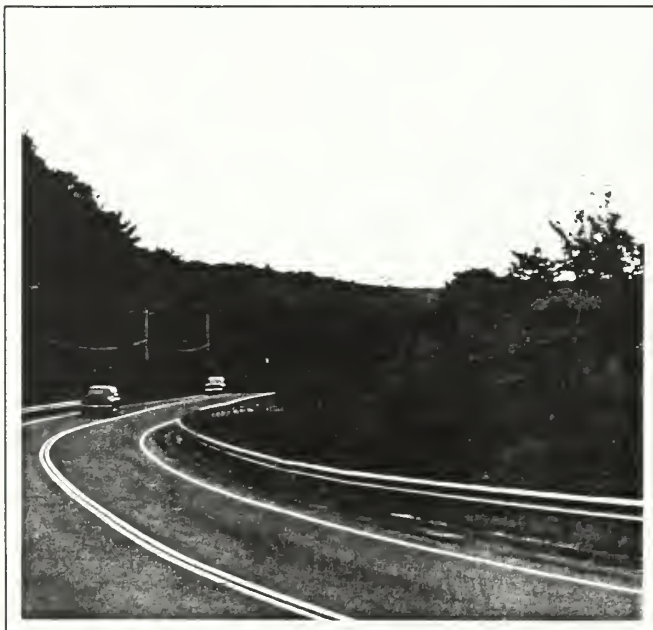


Greenwater Pond view south

LEE-GREENWATER POND BROOK



Scenic Road Segment
Assessment Ranking: **HIGH**



Wetland view southeast

With Greenwater Pond Brook running on the south side of the road, this segment is distinctive for its wetland with marsh grasses and wildflowers on the south contrasted to the steep hillsides of Mt. Walling on the north. The road rises and falls as it passes over the hills and curves to skirt the marsh for a series of changing views. Several 19th century farmsteads in this segment contribute to its rural appeal, and under snow several fields appear to be seamless and extensive. A turn-out at the border between Lee and Becket is an old curve on the south side of the road and is surrounded by open land.

APPENDIX

Scenic Landscape Inventory Forms



DESC. OF STARTING POINT: Lee at mile marker #18.5 east to Russell.
 WEATHER: Overcast / cool
 DATE/HOUR: Aug 12 '93 / 8:00 AM

LOCATION (mileage/direction)	HORIZON	DEPTH OF VIEW	FIELD OF VIEW	VARIETY	EYESORES	TOTAL RATING	COMMENTS
18.5/East	4	2	4	3	3	10	Large hill closes off the horizon; Rt 90 crosses in front of the hill; wide horizon; busy signage; bad architecture; river runs under tumpike overpass; large unused warehouse/factory building.
19/East	4	2	3	4	2	11	Inconsistent width of bike strip; ramshackle buildings on north edge of road; pull-off at 19.4.
19.5/East	4	2	2	4	1	11	Handsome architecture but a bit run-down; bike strip has more consistent width.
20/East	4	1	4	3	1	11	The No-Hunger Cafe; road bends frequently; good pavement quality; tertiary run-off stream bed overpass; large patch of wild luciothue on right noise from Rt. 90; steep upgrade from 20.3-20.7.
20.5/East	3	0	1	3	1	6	B&B on left; range of hills at north; no bike strip; concrete works on right;
21/East	3	0	2	3	1	7	curvy, consistent 2% upgrade from 21.0-21.7; horizon hill appears at 21.5; pavement is a poorer quality here.
21.5/East	5	3	3	4	1	14	21.6 the Tivoli Tavern. Rt. 90 passes under road; horizon opens-wide view of rolling hills; road levels out large dune hills at left.
22/East	5	3	4	5	1	16	CG blacktop company has machinery out in lot; noise from Rt 90 and 20 is audible; homes have large grassy lots at north & well groomed.
22.5/East	4	2	2	4	1	11	Consistent curvy road; homes of moderate means; houses at night. Balden Tavern at night; old apple orchard on left; nice sloping hill across the horizon.
23/East	5	3	4	6	2	16	Wetland at right; beginning of lake; north becomes steep and wooded; Becket town line; Appalachian trail marker; big hill at south begins to appear; north still closed off and steep.
23.5/Southeast	4	2	2	3	2	9	Lake in full view; rock outcrop out of hill to south; road noise from 20&90; steep slope at north; Arthurs Steak House
24/South	4	2	4	5	2	13	Large rock at left and two shabby houses; narrow bike strip; 24.4 lake and.
24.5/South	3	0	1	4	2	6	Abandoned houses on left and right; nice wetland on south at 26.6 on roadside; through overpass; Rt 90 overpass at 24.7.
25/South	3	0	1	2	2	4	Dense forest at right, less dense on left; road pull-off; sparse homes; 25.3 meadow at left through a clearing in the trees; at left trees open up to reveal a long range of hills and a wildflower meadow; road bends; meadow opens wide at left.
25.5/South	3	0	3	4	2	8	Meadow at right is small but attractive; cemetery on right is well kept with a great stone wall in front; houses at right; far away, Rt 90 overpass spans the road; a Becket map beside the cemetery.
26/Southeast	5	2	4	5	2	14	Interesting dead trees in the wetland at left; this area is lovely but too busy to be meditative; road becomes a steep upgrade >15% for .5 miles; pine Pine grove at left; some scattered residences through the trees; upgrade continues past 27.2; consistent width bike strip. Jacob's Pillow entrance.
26.5/Southeast	3	3	2	1	1	8	
27/East	3	0	1	2	1	5	Fence at subdivision entrance; promitory hare; bird feeder man at left
27.5/East	3	0	1	2	1	5	Jacob's Hollow development; a nice small wetland with dead trees through a clearing in the forest; road descends from promitory at 27.4; 27.7 the Rising Sun golf course with a beautiful wildflower meadow and rolling topo with hills across the horizon; road descent and.
28/East	4	2	3	4	2	11	Stream & wetland on right (28); 28.1 Backatt Woods development;

ROUTE 20 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

DESC. OF STARTING POINT: Lee at mile marker #18.5 east to Russell.
 WEATHER: Overcast / cool
 DATE/HOUR: Aug 12 '93 / 8:00 AM

LOCATION (mileage/direction)	HORIZON	DEPTH OF VIEW	FIELD OF VIEW	VARIETY	EYESORES	TOTAL RATING	COMMENTS
28.5/East	3	0	1	2	1	5	tennis court on right; upgrade grows steeper; Buckminster Fuller Entrance to defunct Jacob's Well development; pull-off at 28.6; upgrade ends at 28.7 with a promontory (little to see though).
28.7/East	5	3	3	4	2	13	The Albany stone landmark; abandoned house.
29/East	3	0	3	2	2	6	The Jacob's Well development (proposed); road on downgrade since 28.7; a totally undeveloped pull-off at left.
29.5/East	3	0	1	2	1	5	Road descent continues; Berkshire Berries restaurant (29.7);
30/East	3	0	2	3	1	7	29.8 Becket Fire Department; meadow at left; descent continues. Road follows humps in contour during descent and it looks cool; dense forest on either side with development road.
30.5/Southeast	3	0	1	2	1	5	Road bends sharply right.
31/East	3	0	4	5	3	9	Descent finished as topo levels out; Becket motel and Bonnie Rigg camp; meadow on right; hills surround the view; Route 8 junction; another descent begins; river on right begins but the stream bed is not large (31.3);
31.5/East	4	1	2	4	1	10	31.4 rock outcrop; small pull-off on right; minimal promontory. Stream viaduct overpass; 31.6 old apple orchard on left amidst lowland trees; another viaduct.
32/East	4	1	1	4	1	9	Stream runs at left; road twists pleasantly; 32.1 another viaduct as stream now runs right; 32.2 steep slope at left; rock outcrops frequently; 32.3 retaining wall on left; stream audible at night; traffic light; 32.4 rocky still
32.5/East	4	1	2	5	1	11	32.6 Stream viaduct switched to left side; descent continues; 32.8 Quarry road; new pavement with a good bike strip; noticeably quiet stretch of road; 32.9 really nice section; road bands in an 's'; mountains cleave in multiple peaks; river is audible; steep sides; rock outcrops.
33/East	3	0	2	4	1	8	Homes begin; 33.1 nice willow tree end home; steep hill at rear of house; descent begins; 33.2 stream visible at night; feels like a canyon.
33.4/East	4	1	2	4	1	10	View of hill slants in the horizon; 33.7 Chester town line and the natural spring; big rock outcrops; Welker Island campgrounds; 33.8 road bend reveals big hill closing off the horizon; dense forest at left; stream on right; more rock outcrops; 33.9 broken down concrete retaining wall; ent. to Welker Isle.
34/West	3	0	1	3	1	6	Road bends and descends; high wall on left; stream on right; 34.2 homes dot sides of road; a vista begins to open.
34.5/West	4	1	3	6	1	13	Stone bridge on right side; stone memorial structure in the pull-off at left; steep upslope behind it; its a nice spot to look at the stream on right; 34.6 view closes 34.7 the entrance to the mine at left; entering town center; 34.8 another nice view of the stream at night; homes are close together.
35/Southeast	4	2	3	2	2	9	The main town population center; 35.2 the jail; 35.3 a pull-off; viaduct for stream to cross from right to left; at this point a large hill wraps from the center to the left horizon a full 90 deg.
35.5/Southeast	4	2	3	4	1	12	35.6 cemetery at right; 35.7 exit the town pop. center; steady upgrade begins; railroad tracks below road at left; view to left sometimes shows beautiful hill through the thin growth.
35.8/Southeast	3	0	1	1	1	4	36 Bay State road entrance at left; nice series of hills on horizon; several houses here; hills still quite striking; 36.4 very beautiful view; 180 deg. view of hills all around; road curves; homes line the road; it's quiet; 36.5 medium sized meadow at right and left; still a pretty view of hills on either side; 36.7 road pull-off at a good spot along the river at left.

ROUTE 20 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

DESC. OF STARTING POINT: Lee at mile marker #18.5 east to Russell.
 WEATHER: Overcast / cool
 DATE/HOUR: Aug 12 '93 / 8:00 AM

LOCATION (mileage/direction)	HORIZON	DEPTH OF VIEW	FIELD OF VIEW	VARIETY	EYESORES	TOTAL RATING	COMMENTS
36.7/Southeast	4	1	1	5	1	10	36.8 road ascends out of that lowland spot up with steep forest on right; sparse woods on left; spotty views of hills at left
37/Southeast	4	2	3	4	1	12	Private steel bridge across stream at left; hills still visible at front and left;
37.3/Southeast	3	0	1	2	1	5	37.1 open views to river on left; 37.3 the Wildcat Springs restaurant; road closes off the view; leaf tunnel begins; leaf tunnel is spotty, not consistent; forest darkens the road considerably.
37.8/East	4	2	2	5	1	12	37.5 large hill rises in front of us; opens view to hillside
38.3/Southeast	3	0	1	2	1	5	
38.7/Southeast	4	1	2	5		12	Just into Chester
39.3/East	3	0	2	1		6	Just before County
39.7/East	4	2	2	3		11	Line Tavern
40/Southeast	3	0	1	2		6	
40.5/Southeast	4	2	3	3		12	
41/Southeast	5	3	4	4		16	Huntington downtown
41.5/Southeast	5	2	5	4	1	15	At pull-off, auto parts sign, small cemetery
42/Southeast	5	2	4	5	2	14	Stone wall(W) & river
42.7/Southeast	4	1	3	5	1	12	Crescent Mills
43/East	4	2	3	6	1	14	Potential views to riv.
43.5/East	5	3	4	5	1	16	obscured by brush
44/South	5	3	3	7	1	17	VFW pkng lot.
44.4/South	3	1	1	2	2	5	Mortimore farm
45/South	5	3	2	4	1	13	Pine Hill Rd. entrance
45.5/South	4	2	2	5	1	12	Riverview Rest. sign
46/Southeast	5	3	3	4	2	13	Beside Wippemon
46.5/Southeast	5	3	4	6	1	17	Views of multiple peaks, valley, ret.wall
47/Southeast	5	3	4	4	1	15	Potential views west with cleared brush
47.5/South	4	2	3	3	1	11	Potential views west with cleared brush
47.7/South	4	2	3	4	1	12	Bad retaining wall, jarring signage, pot. views west with cleared brush
48/South	4	2	3	4	3	10	
48.5/East	3	0	1	2	1	5	Masspike overpass, RR & car noise
49/South	4	2	4	5	1	14	
49.180/South	3	0	1	2	2	4	







**PIONEER VALLEY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

26 Central Street • West Springfield, MA 01089
(413) 781-6045